BEAUTY FOR ASHES

He Has Done Wonders For My Soul

J.S. LABUSCHAGNE

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J.S. Labuschagne B.A. (Stellenbosch)

My Personal Testimony Of God's Love & Mercy

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Posthumously dedicated to J.S. (Hannes) Labuschagne by the publisher:

"God will not look you over for medals, degrees or diplomas, but for scars."

Elbert Hubbard
(1856-1915)

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PROLOGUE

As a young, 14-year-old convert in Virginia (OFS), I first began to take notice of Pastor Hannes Labuschagné in 1962, when I was introduced to the AFM (Apostolic Faith Mission) for the first time, and was then also baptised in that historic year of my life as a young believer.

Having grown up in a Reformed Church, my first impressions of the AFM in 1962 were a fresh, new experience: fiery preaching, beautiful Evangelical music, a dual-medium (Afrikaans & English) church culture, and the discovery of the Bible as a living, pulsating book filled with life-changing messages. After my conversion in Virginia in 1962, I took a long, roundabout journey: we went back to the Transvaal, first to Randfontein and then to Carletonville, where I fell away from the faith. I matriculated in 1965 and, on 4 January 1966, I climbed into the green Defence Force truck at Pretoria Station along with hundreds of other "recruits" for my compulsory national service year at Voortrekkerhoogte (Pretoria).

In 1974, we moved to Vanderbijlpark, where my father started a business in Attie Fourie Street. He specialised in textiles (curtain and dress material, etc.). It so happened that I, unmarried and at the age of 27, went one Sunday to listen to Hannes Labuschagne, a visiting preacher and now a minister in the Pentecostal Protestant Church (PPC). After that, my life was never the same again. Since I had stopped smoking during 1973, and thus had begun to become more health-conscious, I was as excited and ready as an athlete at his starting blocks to once again become deeply involved in the Gospel, and consequently later served as a young man in various offices in my congregation. The “shot” was so powerful that I even sold my set of golf clubs.

Nevertheless, through the years, it was the preaching of Hannes Labuschagne that always impressed me the most. Short in stature but with a huge, resonant voice, Hannes faithfully served for years in various offices in the executive leadership of his church, including a term as Federal Chairman, which in certain church denominations today is known as the “president” (alas).

In the 1990s, when the news of his death reached me in Thabazimbi, where I worked at the Thabazimbi Iron Ore Mine, I was deeply shocked and bitterly disappointed. It was a great loss for the church, because although Hannes had already “retired” by that time, he often still “performed.” Hannes died when his tour bus, returning from Namibia where he had launched a private Gospel campaign, was involved in a road accident. I trust that Hannes’s story, told here by himself, will inspire the reader to greater faith and confidence in your own walk of life.

P.J. Stassen
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Chapter 1

EARLY CHILDHOOD

My Mother's Healing and Conversion

It is the year 1910. On a farm in the Koppies district a young woman of age nineteen lay dying ... it was my mother. Her last wish was that the 'Intercessors' had to come and pray for her. These intercessors were brothers from the Pentecostal persuasion who used to ride from farm to farm to preach the Gospel.

My Grandfather van Zyl was a very cantankerous old man and threatened to shoot the 'sect' were they to dare to come to his farm, and now, he was standing at the deathbed of his daughter: What to do? Will he refuse her request? At last the eldest son, Jan, is told to take horse and buggy to go and fetch the Intercessors on a neighbouring farm.

After the Intercessors have prayed, she could sit up straight and asked for food. My grandfather was so impressed that he started to ask questions, and by the time the sun was disappearing behind the Freestate horizon, my Grandfather, Jan van Zyl, was already kneeling low at the feet of Jesus. God had truly saved him, and he was a lifelong active labourer in the the service of the Master. The entire family, father, mother and twelve children were eventually saved and baptised.

My Mother was married to Christiaan Labuschagné, a teacher. I was born on the 29th April 1916, on the farm Rooiwal, adjacent to the Valsriver near Bothaville in the Freestate. I was the youngest of five children, i.e., four brothers and a sister.

We were a very happy famiiy, but in Januarie 1920, while we were on vacation and visiting family in Parys, South Africa, my Mother died. After the funeral my Father immediately went to order his casket and, exactly one month and twenty days later, we buried him too. The cause was a broken heart.

I was not even four years old yet, and sorely needed the love of a mother. Just before she died, she could, however, still muster the strength to pray for her five children. She put her hand on my head and prayed in faith: "Lord, this little one I am giving for Your work."

The Fate of an Orphan

The children were then distributed among the family. My second eldest brother, Jannie, and I went to one of my Mother's brothers. Their marriage at that stage was childless, although they had already been married for twelve years.

My life as an orphan was one of cruelty and injustice. Enough happened to me to make me a physical and spiritual wreck. Eventually, a little girl was born into the household, and when she was two years old, she drowned in a well. My tender heart had to once again face the grief of death, for we loved her dearly.

I was twelve years old, and we lived in Volksrust. One of my Mother's brothers, Nico, was pastor of the congregation. One Sunday evening, after a serious message, I gave my heart to the Lord. It felt as though I was walking on clouds. The inner peace was indescribable, because although I was only twelve years old, I was already very mature for my age. I had to resole my own shoes, darn my own socks, and mend my own clothes. I was not allowed to sleep in the house. In the backyard, above the cowshed, was my little room, which I had to share with bales of feed for the cows. There I fell ill, and then recovered again. Nobody cared … after all, I was just an orphan. All my guardians knew was beatings, cruel blows with straps or cart reins. Everything that went wrong meant another terrible thrashing.

Will I ever forget the day I killed the calf? It happened like this: It was my responsibility to tend the garden and look after the cows and calves. We had a spoiled calf that broke through the barbed wire fence every afternoon and went to suckle. For me, that meant only one thing: another merciless beating.

One afternoon, while I was busy hoeing in the garden, I heard wires snapping, and there he went again to suckle. Hopeless and crying, I pelted him with stones. One struck him right behind the head, and he fell down stone dead. And now, what was I to do? Who understands a child's heart? I had committed murder; my whole life lay in ruins!

Utterly stunned, I blurted out the whole truth at home. My uncle took me by the hand and began to preach to me. "Poor animal," he said with feeling. "To think you cruelly murdered him, stoned him to death." Then I felt truly miserable. Well, that meant only one thing: cruel retribution. I put on the three pairs of trousers I owned and meekly walked to the torture bench. That day my uncle beat me until I crawled around on the stable floor, begging for mercy.

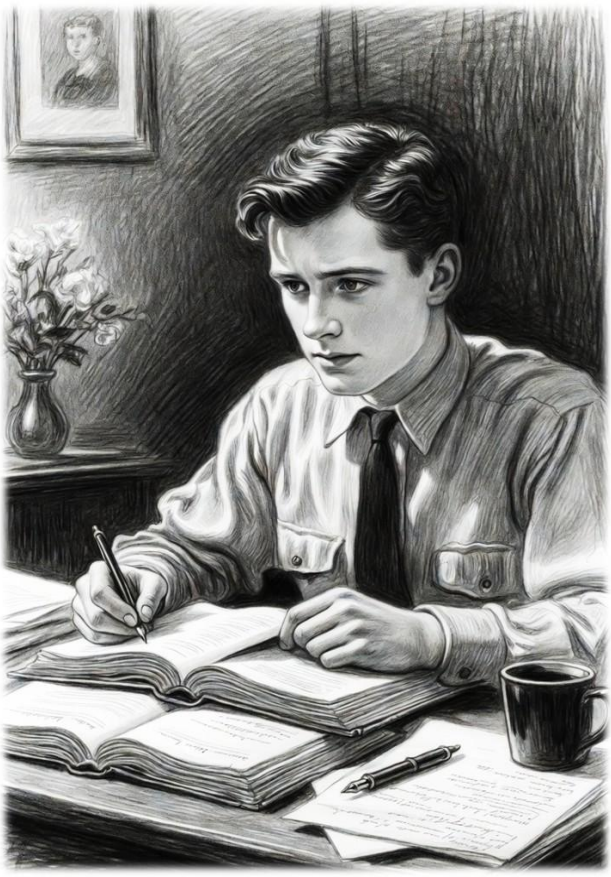
What hides inside a little Sunday School Lesson?

During this time, my Sunday school teacher was covering the lesson about Solomon's choice of wisdom. That night, I lay in my little bed next to the bales of forage again, with the candle holder on my forehead. I spoke so beautifully to the Lord. "Oh, dear Jesus, I am after all just a despised orphan. Rich or famous I will never be, but give me wisdom too, just as You gave it to Solomon." When I opened my Bible, my eye caught the verse: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." At the end of that year, I passed Standard 7. However, my aunt chased me away because she had to buy my schoolbooks. I went to Durban, but I could not find any work because I was too young. After eighteen months, I went back to school; this time in Steynsburg in the Northern Cape. There, I wrote matric. In the meantime, I was confirmed and introduced into the Dutch Reformed Church (NG Kerk), and Dr. Rex, our minister, asked me to teach Sunday school.🔲

Chapter 2

STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY

Our Disappointment God's Provision



After matric, I started working on the Railways, first in Durban, and later in Johannesburg. However, I had a burning ambition to study further, but where would the money come from? I gave up my job and started a theatre company. A Dutch drama was adapted into Afrikaans and we began rehearsing. My partner, however, was also a backslider like me and everything went wrong. His child became seriously ill, and, at the insistence of his wife, we gave up.

There I sat without a job. These were difficult years, just before the Second World War, and work was extremely scarce. A stomach ulcer caused me to waste away. My sleeping place was on the floor in the pantry of some people. And there, in my extreme distress, I began to call out to the Lord one night. God often allows a crisis in our lives to bring us to our senses. I wanted to follow my own mind and was ambitious. But up there in heaven, God made a little note in His book; it was the prayer of a faithful mother: "Lord, I give this little guy for Your work." And, God did not forget.

That night, I threw myself unconditionally on the Lord's mercy. However, I would still pay a high price in life lessons before the Lord would be satisfied with me.

The God of Wonders

During that time, the Lord sent an old friend from work to me. He was unmarried and offered to pay for my studies. It was almost too good to be true.

Today I understand these things better, because I know Him better. It is just like Him ... wonderful! At the beginning of 1939, I subsequently went to the University of Stellenbosch. Oh, how happy I felt ... finally, I would be able to realise my ideals!

I was very active in church circles: singing in the student church choir, and a leader in the SCA (Students' Christian Association). And yet, I just went with the flow. Often, the Holy Spirit convicted me right on the dance floor. What am I looking for here? Then I would just carry on as before. The Lord was working on me, but He would first have to corner me in His crush-pens before I would listen. I also did not have a clear understanding of what God required of me.

About two years passed, but God looked at His notebook again: "Lord, I give this little guy for Your work." There was only one way to bring me back into the focus of His sweet Will; I had to go through a crisis again. Strange how the Lord uses crises in our lives to achieve His purpose with us. When you are in the crisis, you only see smoke and fire, and you imagine everything is ruined. Never mind, it is only the wood, hay, and stubble burning away (1 Corinthians 3:12). The gold, silver, and precious stones will remain.

God's Mill grinds Fine

In 1 Corinthians 3:9, the Bible says: "For we are God's fellow workers." This means that we are working with God on the very same project. When we bring a matter to the Lord faithfully in prayer, we "oblige" God to act. God's own faithfulness obliges Him, because He cannot deny Himself. We also know that God forces no one to serve Him, but He can go a long way to compel us if a fellow worker can be found.

And so it happened that the Lord let me end up in His mill. Yes, He had to set it finely to grind my own stubborn will to powder. In my third year at University, things began to go wrong for me. Have you ever been in a place where it seems like nothing wants to go right? Circumstances simply gathered around me like storm clouds, plunging me into a fierce struggle. Late at night, when everyone else was asleep, I tried to pour the bitterness of my soul into poetry. Through my literature studies, I had realized that all people are merely searching for "Nirvana," a kind of heaven where happiness and peace reign. Everyone looks for an escape from their oppressive circumstances.

Sometimes it really did feel as if relief was coming, only to find out once again that it was a mirage. I tried to satisfy the loneliness of my heart, my longing for love, in the unreal atmosphere of the cinema. I practically lived there. Then I would project myself into the hero and forget my own misery. However, when I returned home, that is, to the awful reality within the four grey walls of my daily routine, I would just fall right back into the old ruts on the plains of despair, and write poetry:

Laugh, you coward, laugh
And scream until you are hoarse at the joke
Drink yourself drunk and be a hero,
Satisfied with yourself.
Let your tears flow back
To where they overflow from your heart,
And if you sometimes painfully sigh,
Smother it with a laugh.
Shut tight your eyes,
And grope blindly
For stability in the wind.
Laugh, you coward, laugh
And scream until you are hoarse at the joke.

Sometimes temporary resignation comes:

Lie still, my child, lie still,
For cold is the wind and chill.
You toss and turn
And struggle with what?
Like a beast that claws
At the wire of its cage
And bites with a bloody mouth.
Lie still, my child, lie still,
And close your eyes if you will,
For cold is the wind and chill.

And, when I finally fell asleep from exhaustion in the early morning hours, the oblivion of sleep mercifully folded me into its arms.

All I desire is to be still,
To quietly heal the pain of my heart
In a sigh-soft slumber where broader thoughts wander in peace.
With an ear that does not hear how the rain on the pane
Of my window comes whispering,
As if you are asking me, and then listening
To see if the nightly darkness carries my answers.
I want to be still tonight, for the silence gives me strength.
There were times when I also prayed, and even sought comfort in the Scriptures, but the veil of God's mysteries was drawn over everything.
From me you want to know the answer
That God remains owing us;
From me, who myself am so deeply aware
Of my own imperfection,

You want to find comfort.
In vain my intellect has delved
Into God's mystery;
Who can with a human eye gauge the night's
Depth before the day
Is born from it?

The Mill grinds even Finer

I still went to church regularly. At Stellenbosch, that was the fashion. Everyone goes to church. It did not matter where you were the night before, whether on the dance floor or drunk at some party; on Sunday, everyone goes to church.

There was a Rev. A.F. Louw, a converted minister and a relative of Dr. Andrew Murray. He often stirred me with his preaching, but because he never gave an altar call, I quickly cooled down again. He was like a voice in the wilderness, however, because in Stellenbosch, the cradle of the Afrikaans intellectuals, things like conversion were not really spoken of, at least not in the circles where I moved. In short, I was hopelessly backslidden and consequently lost. My religion was that of a typical Pharisee; so too were my prayers.

The June-July holidays arrived. All the students go home. I did not have a home to go to. For me, there was no warm greeting waiting from longing, loving parents. Deep inside me, a bitterness built up. Yes, I even began to question God's love. Oh, how foolish a person can sometimes be! Asaph cries out in Psalm 73:21-22: "When my heart was embittered and I was pierced in my kidneys, then I was foolish and knew nothing; I was a beast before You."

A student is always broke. I therefore welcomed it when I was approached to help with the translation of Andrew Murray's works from English and Dutch into Afrikaans. At the same time, the Lord provided me with a place to stay for the holidays in the house of one of our professors. I soon made myself at home in the old professor's study and took up my task with zeal. In total, I translated 700 pages of that man of God's works.

See, it was all part of God's plan. The Lord wanted to speak to me, and while I immersed my spirit in the blessed words of this prophet, I painted myself into a corner. There, the Lord finally set the mill.

I get stuck in a Quagmire

The Lord spoke so clearly and directly to me through these books (by Andrew Murray) that I would sometimes start shaking; for instance, I could not even

hold my pen. Then, like a good Pharisee, I would get down on my knees and pray for other people, i.e., the hospitals, orphanages, the elderly, and so forth.

The struggle grew worse and worse. I could not eat or sleep. I walked up and down along the river like a person possessed. Five days and nights passed like this. Flesh and blood could no longer endure it. Friday night arrived. The weather had been so gloomy all week long. Every now and then, an acorn fell onto the roof when the wind slightly shook the old oak tree. Otherwise, the drizzle sifted down incessantly. None of these things were conducive to a peaceful mind, least of all to my own storm-tossed inner self.

Satan speaks to me

As I stood there on the banks of the Eersterivier, Satan came to me. I know he is a reality. The leafless trees looked like hideous monsters, accusing the heavens with bony fingers, while the floodwaters thundered past incessantly right at my feet.

"You say there is a God of love," Satan began. "Why are things going this way for you? Look, before you were even four years old, the Lord took away your parents. When you needed a mother's love the most, you were left an orphan. Is that the work of a God of love? And look at your life as an orphan: how can a God of love allow such injustice?" He kept expanding on this theme for a long time, and I did not have an answer for him. Finally, he said to me: "Look, the river is full and the current is strong. Jump deep into that churning water. Take your own life; you cannot go on like this!"

I stood there on the bank of the river, discouraged, lost, and forsaken by God and man (so I thought). It was raining softly, but inside my soul, the hail crackled and the lightning struck.

On the Edge of Suicide

I stood there on the bank of the roaring floodwaters. In front of me, however, was not just water. I was standing on the edge of Eternity. Yet, just before I could jump irrevocably into that seething current, something wonderful happened. For some inexplicable reason, I suddenly collapsed to the ground and literally cried out: "O God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" It was not one of those nice, routine prayers, but the anguished cry of a soul in distress. The Scripture teaches in Psalm 51: "God desirestruth in the inward parts." God looks for the prayer within our prayers.

The Lord is my Shepherd

Immediately, a massive burden rolled off me in a practically tangible way, and the words of Psalm 23 came floating past my mind's eye: "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want." Suddenly, I realized that the Good Shepherd had picked me up, His lost little lamb, and pressed me to His chest.

Oh, how safe I felt! I was no longer afraid of the howling of the wolves or the yelping of the jackals. In that moment, the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, filled my entire being. God revealed Himself to me through that well-known verse. The Lord is my Shepherd, and I shall not want. Suddenly, the emptiness inside was filled, that is, the emptiness that had been there all those years since my mother's death. I had hardly known a mother's love, but this current of grace overflowing my heart now was more and better than a mother's love; it was sufficient.

I stood up from my knees with a deep and tender gratitude for a God of love who had saved me on the brink of suicide. I am certainly no better than thousands of others who have committed suicide. I was simply someone who had a mother who knew the Lord, and who had bound me with prayer to the altar of grace.

It was already late at night, and the streets were deserted. In the meantime, the clouds had disappeared and the moon sat brilliantly white in a clear, starry sky. Everything was so beautiful and clean. The droplets of water hanging on the wire fence sparkled like pearls in the moonlight, and right here inside my heart, it was clean, washed white as snow in the blood of Jesus.

I then went straight to my room, because I was exhausted after such a prolonged struggle. In my room, I just collapsed onto my bed and fell asleep almost immediately. Oh, how sweet is the sleep of those whose sins are forgiven and whose transgressions are wiped out!

We Plan but God Provides

The next day, I went to Rev. Louw to tell him the good news. He appreciated it deeply because he himself was saved. He prayed for me and I left. Immediately, I felt an urge to go and work for the Lord, and I began making arrangements to become a minister in the Dutch Reformed Church (NG Kerk). However, the Lord had other plans for me. Are you surprised that I love Him? He is, after all, wonderful! His ways are unsearchable, hallelujah!

A Remarkable Vision

While I was visiting family in Durban during the December-July holidays, they invited me to a church service one Sunday morning. It was at the AFM, and the young people were experiencing a time of revival. They knew that I belonged to the Dutch Reformed Church, and they wanted to show off a little with their pastor, who delivered a good message. To their disappointment, however, he was not in the service that particular Sunday morning. So, they held a "testimony service" instead. This, too, was part of God's divine plan for me. What struck me the most that morning was the young people's fiery testimonies and their boldness in sharing them.

I then stood up to testify as well but found that my trousers were shaking so much that I could scarcely stand on my feet. There, I made the discovery that would change the entire course of my life. These young people had something that I did not! It was difficult for me to admit this, because as a staunch Dutch Reformed man, I had secretly looked down on Pentecostal people a bit.

The next morning, I woke up at the very first break of dawn. I drew back the curtains and admired the lovely morning light. Immediately after I laid my head back down on the pillow, the Lord caught me away in the Spirit. I found myself dressed in a clean suit of clothes among a crowd of people. One of them came up to me and said: "We have decided to ask you to lead us." (I belonged to a 'Mountain and Touring Club' where we always had a guide who knew the mountains). It is remarkable that the Lord speaks to a person in a language that they understand best.

Well, these people then asked me to be their guide. I agreed, but requested permission to first inspect the road ahead, and then I came to a fork in the road. The left-hand road was wide and strewn with many flowers, and it also had the sea on one side, truly a pleasure to the eye. The right-hand road was just a narrow little path winding rather uninterestingly over the hills.

I immediately took the wide road, with the intention of at least having something to show the people along the way. However, a man in a car full of people came towards me, and I explained my dilemma to him. "Which is the right road now?" I asked, and I emphasized the fact that I had a great responsibility because I had a crowd of people placed in my care.

The driver of the car then answered: "Man, this wide road certainly looks very beautiful to the eye, but I must warn you, it is full of potholes, and besides, it does not go to the place you are heading. There is only one road that leads to your destination, and it is that narrow little path."

I told him then that I did not feel up to that lonely road, because I did not have travel provisions like his people did. Every one of them had a backpack full of provisions that they, like a mountaineer, could usually take along with them.

"Oh, that?" he said. "Do not worry. Look, right there where you are standing is your provisions." I looked then and saw a packet of sandwiches and a few

oranges lying on the ground. Just as I picked them up, the person who had asked me to lead them came and said: "The time is now ripe; you must come now."

When I came to, I was lying on my bed in my room, amazed by the extremely vivid vision I had just had.

The Lord brings the Vision to fulfillment

It was the end of January 1942, and I was on my way back to Stellenbosch for my fourth year. In Volksrust, I visited my Uncle Nico van Zyl for a week, who was then a pastor of the FGC (Full Gospel Church of God). I then heard them talking about a baptism service that Sunday. However, it had nothing to do with me, because I was Dutch Reformed and was now going to study to become a minister. They also did not dare talk to me about baptism, because I stood rock-solid with my church. On the Saturday afternoon, I was sitting alone on the veranda, praying. I burned to know what God's purpose for my life was and what the vision from the week before could mean.

While I was still deep in prayer, the vision came before my mind's eye once more. When I reached the place where I picked up the travel provisions, a voice said clearly and urgently: "Why do you delay? Arise and be baptized, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." It was the Lord speaking to me. I immediately stood up and said to my uncle, Pastor van Zyl: "Uncle Nico, won't you please baptize this Dutch Reformed man tomorrow too?"

Tears of joy and victory flowed after that, because I found out just how much they had been praying for me. On Sunday afternoon, 2 February 1942, I was then baptized by immersion in a stream near Newcastle.

The Gift of the Holy Spirit

The next morning, my aunt came to me. "Hannes," she said, "the Lord is showing me that He wants to baptize you in the Holy Spirit before you leave for Stellenbosch." That afternoon at two o'clock, we closed the living room door behind us and began to pray. If ever there was anyone who desperately needed the power of God, it was me. But it had to be genuine. My entire education had taught me to look for stability in all my experiences. One of my subjects was psychology, and when I sank to my knees to pray, the enemy of my soul was immediately right there.

You know how skeptical Dutch Reformed people were in those days toward the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Today, there are even ministers who speak in tongues. But the faithful God of compassion did not forget me. The Holy Spirit gave me just one scripture passage with which to fight the enemy, and it was

Jacob's words to God when he wrestled with Him: "I will not let You go unless You bless me."

This created a holy determination inside me. The enemy tried hard to rob me of the blessing by raising all kinds of psychological arguments, but I found that the *Sword of the Word* is tremendously sharp and effective. The first hour passed, and the struggle continued. By and large, the second hour passed too, and no victory was yet in sight. The third hour came and went, and still I persisted: "Lord, I will not let You go unless You bless me." I am certain that we would achieve many more victories if we would just hold on a little longer.

After three and a quarter hours, the atmosphere in the room changed noticeably. It was as if heaven had suddenly descended upon us. In ecstasy, I cried out: "Hallelujah!" At least, that was what I intended to say. But what actually came out was a strange word that I did not know. I tried again: "Hallelujah!" But then it bubbled up like a fountain, and I heard myself speaking in a foreign tongue that I had never learned. Then I knew it was genuine, that it came from the Lord, and it is marvelous in our eyes.

I stood on my feet praising and magnifying the Lord while my tongue spoke mysteries with God: "For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries" (1 Corinthians 14:2). I could not stand on my feet for long, however, because I staggered like a drunken man. After all, the Scripture says the people thought the disciples were full of sweet wine (on the day of Pentecost).

We sat down for dinner, but crying and laughing were all mingled together. Oh, the joy of having an opened fountain within the soul! Jesus said it would well up inside you like rivers or streams of living water.

In Partnership with the Holy Spirit

On the way back to Stellenbosch, everyone had to hear about the miracle that had happened to me; even the ticket examiner had to go through it. Oh, the ideals I cherished. I know my fellow students well; I know their shortcomings. I know that they need the Lord very much. Oh, if only I could transfer this newly found peace to them. I saw visions of a mighty revival in Stellenbosch, of students powerfully coming to conversion and breaking away from the limitations of traditional religion.

The first person I could speak to was my best friend, Hannes Nieuwoudt. While I was telling him about my remarkable experience of recent times, he suddenly started grinding his teeth, and finally, he burst out: "Look here, Hannes, if you don't stop right now, it is the end of our friendship. My religion is too sacred to me; I do not like to talk about it." How could I possibly remain silent? Had I not practically risen from the dead?

I sit in class while the professor's voice drones on. Every writer, every poet searches for something, for happiness, a place or a state to which they can

escape. I see my old self again, where during the cold morning hours at night, I tried to cast my grief into verse form, like one pours molten steel into moulds. Then I feel like crying out loud, "Eureka! I have found it!" People, can you not understand then? Poets, writers, I have the answer. Jesus is the answer. Flee to Him. He invites: "Come to Me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."

My Disillusionment

That first Sunday, I was in my place at church. I still belonged to the Dutch Reformed Church (NG Kerk); I did not even know about a Pentecostal church in Stellenbosch. Sunday evening, after the service, the Lord told me that I had to go to Reverend (Ds.) Louw's house. There were about thirty students there that evening, besides Reverend and Mrs. Louw with their children, including a Dr. Louw from the Mission in what was then Nyasaland.

After the usual commonplaces, I said to Reverend Louw: “Reverend, do you mind if I give my testimony?”

“No, go right ahead,” he answered.

He remembered that eight months prior, I had come to tell him about my conversion on the banks of the Eerste River.

“My fellow students,” I began, “you all know me very well. I was always the joker among you. I also took the lead in the spiritual matters of the CSV (Christian Students' Association). But tonight I want to tell you ... I was lost, I was on my way to hell with my religion and all.”

Some of those present looked up in surprise. One does not often hear such things in Stellenbosch. It is not considered good taste. But, when I said I was baptised by immersion, everyone lowered their heads. The atmosphere was so thick that you could figuratively cut it with a knife. Furthermore, when I told them about the baptism in the Holy Spirit and speaking in other tongues, everyone looked away. The tension was probably unbearable for them. But, the Spirit of the Lord was moving powerfully upon me and I spoke with great boldness.

When I was finished, Mrs. Louw asked me: “In what language did you speak?” I then said I did not know, because the Bible says no one understands it.

“Quiet!” she said fiercely. “I do not want to argue with you.”

Reverend Louw then decided to make the best of the circumstances and suggested that we conclude with prayer. After he prayed briefly, the students disappeared through the front door without a word. After everyone was gone, Reverend Louw took me outside onto the porch and pulled the door shut behind him. He then took my hand in both of his old, wrinkled hands and, with tears of emotion, he said: “Young man, may God be with you.” Two years later, I went to him again with the words: “Reverend, the river isstill getting deeper and wider.” He just stared at me wordlessly. Oh, God is good to man,

and He is good to me; to Him be all the honour and the praise and the glory for ever and ever.

I Learn what the Reproach of the Cross meant

That Monday morning, the university corridors were buzzing. “Have you heard? Labuschagne is in a sect.” It spread like wildfire. Suddenly, I was like a leper. I walked into the classroom; no one wanted to sit next to me; no one wanted to talk to me. All I met were dirty looks. I could not comprehend it. Could they not understand? I had done nothing wrong; I felt so happy because I had found the ‘Pearl of Great Price’. Then I had to find out the hard way that the way of the Cross is a narrow path. There is only room for Jesus and you.

My best friends avoided me on the street. I went to church for choir practice, but the organist just gave me a dirty look. No one wanted to stand next to me. I stood aside here, and like a faithful old dog, I just tagged along. Years later, a minister said to me:

“I cannot understand you people. As soon as you are converted, as you put it, you leave the church.”

“No, Reverend, you are making a mistake. I never left the church. I loved my church, but my church left me. How far could I keep tagging along like a patient lapdog while having to live under the heel of scorn every day?”

Your ways are not my ways, says the Lord

The Lord was very patient with me. He knew that He had to wean me from the Church, just as a mother weans her child. One morning, I arrived half an hour late for a service. This was unheard of; I could not go in now. And, right there, the Lord spoke to me again: "Do you remember seeing the name 'Apostolic Faith Mission' (AFM) in the telephone directory last year? Go look up the address and go there." I hurried to the post office and found the address.

I rode my bicycle up and down the streets. Eventually, I found the place in a part of the town that was unfamiliar to me. When I stepped through the front door, they were just singing: “With Christ in the Vessel I can smile at the Storm.”

I knew immediately that these were my people. There was not even a pastor present that morning, but it did not matter. The atmosphere was right. Out of that congregation, the Lord gave me a wife who has stood faithfully by my side in the service of the Master for over thirty years. Thanks be to God for her. The person who married us read this scripture passage: “He who finds a wife finds a good thing.” Truly, the Lord was good to me to give me such a life partner.

My own brother, with whom I was staying, asked me to rather look for other lodgings. My poor sister-in-law’s nerves were about to give out, and my

brother dreamed that the Lord was coming and he was left behind. I assure you I did not act unwisely, because the Holy Spirit teaches a person wisdom along with knowledge. It was simply the atmosphere in the house as a result of much prayer.

I then worshipped at the AFM (AGS), and in that year, I only missed two services. The Lord then sent us a Pastor Tienie van Rensburg as the shepherd of the congregation. Under his extremely capable and sympathetic leadership, I was able to grow into the task that awaited me later. Prayer was sweet to me from the very beginning. A group of us also gathered every Thursday evening to pray. However, the Dean of the English Faculty offered drama lectures at his house every Thursday evening, so I had to choose: drama lectures or prayer. Naturally, prayer won.

To this day, I still do not know what the professor's house looks like from the inside. The consequence, however, was that he kept a close eye on me, as he viewed it as a personal insult. He was therefore determined to make me fail the subject.

Another Miracle happens

I just put the old professor's name on my prayer list and prayed for him regularly. When the final exams arrived, I unpacked all my books on my bed. I went to kneel beside the bed and prayed more or less like this: "Oh Lord, You know that I have served You faithfully over the past year. And now, Lord Jesus, the moment of truth has arrived for me; I have to account for myself in the exams. Lord, help me to study the right questions."

God is faithful. When I glanced through my question paper in the exam room, I discovered that I knew everything. Out of the 42 questions, I answered 41.5 completely. When the results were published, my name was displayed among those who had passed. My old professor passed away shortly after that, but I still boast in the God of my salvation.

I am Summoned to the Disciplinary Committee

I received an urgent message that I had to go see the secretary of the CSA (CSV), Proponent Liebenberg. So, one afternoon, I took my Bible and walked to the theological seminary where I was to meet him. As I walked through his office door, he cried out:

“What have you gone and done now, old Labbu? I hear you had yourself baptised.”

“Yes, Uncle Fred,” I answered. “But, I see you are busy writing a book on sanctification as we find it in the writings of Dr Andrew Murray ... tell me, have you been baptised in the Holy Spirit yet?” I steered past the water

baptism, because I was so full of the Holy Spirit that I could hardly speak about anything else.

"Well, I think so," he answered.

"Did you speak in tongues?" I wanted to know.

"No, that is not necessary," he snapped back.

For more than three hours, we sat there and argued about the Holy Spirit. Eventually, he said to me:

"My friend, I will tell you what speaking in tongues is. Here in Stellenbosch, there was a washerwoman who worked for a professor. The day she lay dying, she suddenly began to speak in another language. We found it strange that this illiterate woman could speak so fluently, so we called in various professors to come and listen. Eventually, the professor of Latin arrived and said that the woman was speaking pure Latin. We then had to find an explanation for this strange phenomenon. We went back into her life and discovered that when she was a little girl, her mother worked for a professor of Latin. The professor had probably walked up and down, reading aloud from a Latin book. It was then preserved in her subconscious, and when she lay delirious on her deathbed, the words suddenly came forward from the subconscious."

All I replied to that was:

"Tell me, Uncle Fred, did the mothers of those hundred and twenty who were baptised in the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost with the speaking in other tongues all work for professors too?"

At that moment, he grew angry and said, "One just cannot reason with you people. Come, let me pray for you."

After he prayed for me, I also prayed earnestly for him. I never saw him again. May the Lord bless him; he was such a good man, but he did not understand.

The Lord speaks again through a Vision

In that last year at Stellenbosch, God found it necessary to speak to me again. Because the Lord had saved me completely, and I had broken entirely with my past life, I found it strange that there could be Christians who did not always walk in uprightness before the Lord. These people in our own congregation were a stumbling block to me, and God wanted to help me not to stumble. Visions and dreams are not a sign of spirituality. Many times it is just the opposite. It is precisely because we are weak that the Lord comes to meet us in this way.

I remember the late Pastor Henning from Brakpan telling me one day about an angel dressed in blue who was constantly with him after his conversion. And, after he was baptised in the Holy Spirit, there was constantly a halo of light around him. When I asked him if it was still with him, he laughed and

said, “No, it is no longer necessary. In those days I was still very weak and the Lord had to help me in that way. Now I have grown and I walk by faith.”

To return to my dream: I am standing at the starting line with quite a number of athletes (God speaks again in a language I understand). We are all going to participate in a hurdle race. Is life not also like a hurdle race? Everyone is so lively and excited, and off we start. However, we had not advanced very far when I noticed that the person in front of me began to grow listless and stumble along at a snail's pace. Immediately, the thought of the winning post came to my mind and I decided to overtake him. Before long, one of the athletes went to sit down by the side of the road and rubbed his legs.

I also felt very tired then and felt like sitting down. Again, the thought of the winning post came before me and I pushed forward once more. The next thing I knew, someone was lying right in my path. He had stumbled and fallen, and if I am not careful, I am going to fall right over him. Is that not what Satan would love to see, i.e., that we should stumble over other people? But, I keep my mind on the winning post. Jesus is waiting for me there, for He is the Author (Starter) and the Finisher of faith winning post).

Eventually, we came around the last bend after going through dark places and deep waters. However, there were only three of us left. The Scripture teaches: “It is not those who begin, but whoever endures to the end who will be saved.”

When I reached the winning post, Jesus was standing behind a counter of pure gold; however, it was transparent like glass. Behind Him at a desk sat an angel, and the shelves were packed full of files. When Jesus looked at me, He smiled and said, “Well done.”

At that moment, all the weariness disappeared from my body. Jesus then spoke to the angel, who stood up, looked for one of the files, and gave it to the Lord. He then opened it, took a card, and wrote on it: “Preserved until after death.” He then wrote on a second card and handed it to me. The angel took the file from Him and went to put it in its place. Jesus then looked at me so lovingly again and said once more: “Well done.”

Those words are still a tremendous incentive to me to this day. I know: “It will be worth it all when we see Jesus.”□

Chapter 3

I ENTER THE MINISTRY

The year after I obtained my degree, I was working at the headquarters of the AFM (AGS) at 7 De Villiers Street, Johannesburg. I served as an assistant to the General Secretary, Uncle David du Plessis. I immediately started lunchtime prayer meetings for the staff. The Lord met with us wonderfully. There, the Lord spoke to me clearly regarding the ministry, and at the beginning of 1944, we went to Lichtenburg, our first congregation (since I was married in 1943, I now speak of "we").

After Lichtenburg, we went to Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), where we went to establish a work in Gwelo. From there, we went to Natal to take over the Indian ministry for a year. our next congregation was Durban, and it is here where the next big drama unfolded.

The Birth of a Revival

By this time, I was the chairman of the Natal District (AFM/AGS) and served on the Executive Council. Everything seemed to be going smoothly. We had a nice, healthy congregation and I was one of the best-paid pastors in the church. However, my heart could not find complete rest. Here I am living in a city with 400 000 white residents, and every Sunday evening I preach to only a hundred and fifty people. Surely, I am not a hireling. I must reach my city for Christ, but how? God alone knows how.

When I arrived home one day from an Executive Council meeting, I found that my vice-chairman had split the congregation in two. On top of that, I was in a state of nervous exhaustion. In that state of mind, I went down on my

knees and begged the Lord for mercy. I prayed: "Lord, if You can still do something with me, here I am."

I went to my church council and said:

"Brothers, give me an opportunity to find out what will happen if a person truly gets close to God."

We stopped all congregational activities, except for the Sunday school and the Sunday services. Every evening there was a prayer meeting. We kept this up for three months. Three of us, namely myself, Brother Van de Venter my assistant, and Pastor Jimmy Rudd, began to pray in 8-hour shifts.

The Vision of a Large Dam

While I was busy praying in the church, the Lord showed me the following: I am standing in a ploughed field, but everything is dying from the drought. An invisible person then takes me to the top of the wall of the largest dam I have ever seen, full to overflowing.

Immediately, the question rises to my lips: Why this great drought when there is so much water? The person then takes me to a place where the sluices of the dam are opened. I look and see that all the sluices are closed. No water is reaching the arid fields. He places my hand on a crank handle and commands me to turn it. Then I notice something wonderful: The sluice is balanced with steel cables by a counterweight, so that a person can operate it easily.

The voice then says to me: "You are the sluice. Christ is the weight. He must become more, and you less." And, while I am "turning" like that (meaning praying), the weight lowers and the sluice rises. I then see how the water simply forces its way out of the opening, because the pressure must have been immense. I also see other sluices opening and how the parched earth is beautifully irrigated.

One Sunday evening when we arrived at the church, a sister was waiting for me. By her hand, she had a blind little girl of about eleven years old. Quite casually, she says to me: "Pastor, you must pray for this blind child." I was frightened out of my wits because, although we preach these things, it is a different story when it comes to "doing." That evening, I laid hands on her rather half-heartedly amidst the crowd, and when I took my hands away from her eyes, two little brown eyes looked straight into mine. I saw thousands of miracles after that, but that sensation was unique. An old Roman Catholic man who had been brought blind to the service also walked home by himself later on.

Chapter 4

THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL SUMMONS ME

Revival in Brakpan

I received a telegram from the General Secretary requesting me to come to Johannesburg immediately; the brothers had discerned that the hand of the Lord was upon me, and that I should lead the entire church nationwide in a three-month Prayer Campaign.

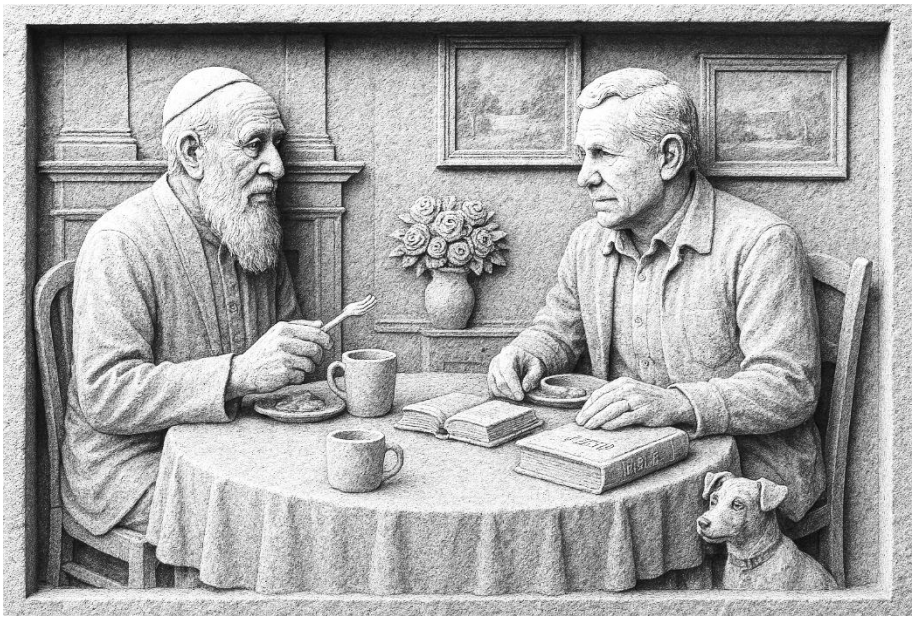
Upon arriving in Johannesburg, I devoted myself at once to fasting and prayer. I also issued a revival leaflet, and wonderful things began to happen in our congregations. Pastor Gillingham invited me to hold special services for him in Brakpan, and already from the very first evening the Lord began to work. Mighty miracles took place and many souls were saved. About thirteen deaf-mutes alone were healed in that one campaign of a month. On the final evening, when I arrived at the church, everything was packed to capacity — even into the vestry and the baptismal font. The grounds around the church were filled with people; the street was full, and even an empty lot across from the church was occupied. That night people saw a Shekinah cloud above the church. Inside the church angels were perceived, and the figure of Jesus was often seen on the platform. The revival continued, and many souls were saved throughout the land. Other preachers received the vision, and the Lord used some of them in wonderful ways.

The Greyville Racecourse Campaigns

God richly rewarded the Durban congregation for six months of prayer. The Lord spoke to William Branham: “Go to Durban, South Africa.” There at the Greyville Racecourse he held the greatest service of his entire ministry, and about 70 000 people heard a fiery Gospel message that day. Five outstanding miracles took place there. The fact that about 30 000 people stood up at the invitation is not for us to judge; Paul says the world must be judged according to his Gospel, for some it is a sweet fragrance leading to salvation, but for others an unpleasant odor leading to condemnation. As for the congregation in Durban, with the pastor and church council, we reached the city with the full Gospel truth. Oh Lord, do it again … but are we willing to pay the price?□

Chapter 5

REFLECTION: BEAUTY FOR ASHES



Reflection.

It is simply astonishing how the Providence of God goes ahead of man's steps. In preparation for his future ministry, God placed the following remarkable circumstances on Hannes's path:

- **Firstly**, a solid basic university education. Yes, the disciples were mostly simple fishermen, but keep in mind (i) that Luke, one of the authors of the four Gospels, was a "physician" in his time, and (ii) that Paul, who left behind such an immense treasure of letters, was originally a Pharisee, i.e., a theologian with strict theological training in the Law of Moses … the Gospel is inseparably part of the Law of Moses.

- **Secondly**, Hannes's "Damascus Road" experience on the banks of the Eerste River in Stellenbosch

- **Thirdly**, Hannes's privilege of translating more than 700 pages of Dr. Andrew Murray's books from Dutch and English into Afrikaans. I am familiar with Dr. Andrew Murray's writings, and although he did not grow up in the Pentecostal movement (as we know it today), Dr. Andrew Murray was almost as evangelical as any Pentecostal preacher today. Just

read his *The Blood of the Cross* or *The Blood of Jesus Christ*, and you will understand what I mean

- **Fourthly**, Hannes's privilege of serving as assistant to David du Plessis, former General Secretary of the Apostolic Faith Mission, who later became known worldwide in church circles as "Mr. Pentecost," and was a founding member and organizer of the first World Pentecostal Conference.

Yes, Hannes Labuschagné later, deep into his seventies, died tragically in a bus accident, but the Bible promises:

"Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His saints."

"Let Your priests be clothed with righteousness, and let Your saints shout for joy." "… and I will clothe her priests with salvation, and her saints shall rejoice."

"How precious to me are Your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them!"

"All Your works praise You, O LORD, and Your saints bless You."
[Psalm 116:15; 132:9,16,17; 145:10]

Signs & Wonders

In the fire of revival, the question is often asked about evangelists' claims: How many of the wonders they testify about were fact, and how many were hyperbole? Yet it is not for us to judge … by their fruit we shall know them. This reissue of an earlier leaflet *(He has done wonders even within my soul),* published by Pastor J.S. Labuschagne in the 1970s, would not have gripped me so deeply had I, as a young and growing Christian, not known the man and his fruits.

He left deep footprints in both the *Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM)* as well as the *Pentecostal Protestant Church (PPC),* where he even advanced to Federal Chairman of the church. I can confidently state that during the 1960s through the 1970s, and even into the early 1980s, he was certainly one of the most prominent ministers and evangelists in South Africa (from the Pentecostal movement).

I must candidly acknowledge that Pastor Hannes Labuschagne, together with other leaders such as Pastor Kalie Vermeulen, Dr. Tienie Cronje, Pastor Pieter Snyman, Pastor George Snyman, and Dr. F.P. Möller (former president of the AFM) were among the Afrikaans-speaking spiritual leaders in South Africa who had the greatest influence on me as a young Christian during the 1960s (and later).

That such a lonely "child of the wind," cruelly traumatized by the loss of both parents at the age of four, and further tormented by several

unsympathetic life circumstances, could rise to such spiritual heights is simply astonishing. Often he himself, in sermons, would mockingly refer to it from the pulpit as "the University of Hard Knocks," which I would later call "the University of Adversity."

It is noteworthy that Hannes Labuschagne illustrated the pinnacle of his career in that era, i.e., the massive William Branham (Greyville) Evangelistic Campaign in Durban, by giving recognition to William Branham, rather than trying to claim the honor for himself. Hannes's deep appreciation for the works of the legendary Andrew Murray (Dutch Reformed Church), of which he as a young student helped translate 700 pages into Afrikaans, further underscores the universal character of the *Ekklesia* (the Universal Church of Christ), which cannot be bound exclusively to a single denomination.

Let Jesus Christ Himself judge the merits of Hannes Labuschagne's contributions and value to the Kingdom, as well as the contributions of Andrew Murray, Dawid du Plessis, and William Branham. Jesus solemnly promised:

> "Therefore whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." [Matthew 5:19]

EPILOGUE

Andrew Murray.

Wikipedia writes as follows:

"Andrew Murray Jr. (9 May 1828 – 18 January 1917) was a South African Dutch Reformed minister, theologian, an educator, revivalist, missionary organizer, and devotional writer.

He was one of the most influential figures in the nineteenth-century Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa, and became internationally known through his books on prayer, holiness, missions, and the spiritual life.

Murray's writings emphasize prayer, surrender to Christ, holiness, missions, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and inward communion with God. He was associated with the 'Higher Life' movement and the Keswick Convention tradition, and modern scholarship has identified him as an important representative of Protestant devotional mysticism and transnational evangelical spirituality." [Wikipedia].

Andrew Murray

SOURCE: Wikipedia

David ('Mnr. Pinkster'/'Mr. Pentecost') du Plessis.

Wikipedia writes as follows:

David du Plessis ('Mr. Pentecost')

SOURCE: California Digital Library

"David Johannes du Plessis (7 February 1905 – 2 February 1987) was a South Africanborn American charismatic minister. He is considered one of the main founders of the charismatic movement, in which the Pentecostal experience of baptism with the Holy Spirit spread to non-Pentecostal churches worldwide.

Born to missionary parents, an 11-year-old du Plessis accepted Christ in 1916, and he received the baptism with the Holy Spirit accompanied by speaking in tongues at the age of 13. He was ordained in 1928 by the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa (AFM). In 1935, he became the general secretary of the denomination where he advocated closer ties between the AFM and South Africa's three sister churches. He later recalled that in 1936 Smith Wigglesworth, during a preaching tour in South Africa, prophesied over him that God would out pour his Spirit upon the historic churches and that he, Du Plessis, would be greatly involved in this.

He worked with Donald Gee to promote cooperation among Pentecostal groups and was involved in organizing the first Pentecostal World Conference (PWC) in 1947. A year later, he resigned as secretary of the AFM to become organizing secretary for the PWC. He served in this role for nine years until 1959.

Du Plessis and his family moved to the United States in the late 1940s. He taught at Lee College, a Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee) school, from 1949 to 1951.He received preaching credentials from the Assemblies of God (USA) and moved to Stamford, Connecticut, in 1952 to serve as interim pastor of Stamford Gospel Tabernacle. In 1962, he surrendered his Assemblies of God preaching credentials under pressure from denominational leadership who opposed his ecumenical efforts. He remained a member of an Assemblies of God church in Oakland, California, and in 1980 his credentials were restored."

[Wikipedia].

“David Johannes du Plessis, famously known as "Mr. Pentecost," died on February 2, 1987, at the age of 81 in Pasadena, California.” [Los Angeles Times].

As a boy, David du Plessis was also deeply moved by the work of the Swiss missionary from the Swiss Pentecostal Missio, Reinhard Gschwend, in those days working among the Sotho people of Lesotho (then Basutholand).

[Ministryjourneyonline.org.].

William M. Branham.

Wikipedia writes as follows::

William M Branham in 1947

SOURCE: Wikipedia

"William Marrion Branham (April 6, 1909 – December 24, 1965) was an American Christian minister and faith healer who initiated the post-World War II healing revival, and claimed to be a prophet with the anointing of Elijah, who had come to prelude Christ's second coming; He is credited as "a principal architect of restorationist thought" for charismatics by some Christian historians, and has been called the 'leading individual in the second wave of Pentecostalism.' He made a lasting influence on tele-evangelism and the modern charismatic movement, and his "stage presence remains a legend unparalleled in the history of the Charismatic movement."

At the time they were held, Branham's inter-denominational meetings were the largest religious meetings ever held in some American cities. Branham was the first American deliverance minister to successfully campaign in Europe; his ministry reached global audiences with major campaigns held in North America, Europe, Africa, and India.

Branham claimed that he had received an angelic visitation on May 7, 1946, commissioning his worldwide ministry and launching his campaigning career in mid-1946. His fame rapidly spread as crowds were drawn to his stories of angelic visitations and reports of miracles happening at his meetings. His ministry spawned many emulators and set in motion the broader healing revival that later became the modern charismatic movement. At the peak of his popularity in the 1950s, Branham was widely adored and "the neo-Pentecostal world believed Branham to be a prophet to their generation". From 1955, Branham's campaigning and popularity began to decline as the Pentecostal churches began to withdraw their support from the healing campaigns for primarily financial reasons. By 1960, Branham transitioned into a teaching ministry.

Unlike his contemporaries, who followed doctrinal teachings which are known as the Full Gospel tradition, Branham developed an alternative theology which was primarily a mixture of Calvinist and Arminian doctrines, and had a heavy focus on dispensationalism and Branham's own unique eschatological views. While widely accepting the restoration doctrine he espoused during the healing revival, his divergent

post-revival teachings were deemed increasingly controversial by his charismatic and Pentecostal contemporaries, who subsequently disavowed many of the doctrines as 'revelatory madness'. His closest followers accepted his sermons as oral scripture and referred to his teachings as 'The Message'. Despite Branham's objections, some followers of his teachings placed him at the center of a cult of personality during his final years.

Branham claimed that he had converted over one million people during his career. Branham died following a car accident in 1965. His teachings continue to be promoted by the William Branham Evangelistic Association, which reported that about 2 million people received its material in 2018."

[Wikipedia].

AUTHOR

Pastor J.S. (Hannes) Labuschagne was born on 29 April 1916 in the district of Bothaville. In 1942 he obtained his BA degree at the University of Stellenbosch. He later served as assistant to Pastor David du Plessis (later known worldwide as "Mr. Pentecost") at the Head Office of the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM), as well as pastor in various AFM congregations. In 1958, with the founding of the Pentecostal Protestant Church (PPC), Pastor Labuschagne became a minister in the PPC, where he served in several offices in the General Executive, including as Federal Chairman of the PPC. He died in the early 1990s in a bus accident on his way back from Namibia to South Africa, at the age of about 77.

PUBLISHER

P.J. Stassen, born in 1947 in Randgate, South Africa, holds a BA degree in Industrial Psychology and Sociology (Industrial) from the University of South Africa (UNISA). A former businessman who, after his compulsory military service in 1966, began his career in a Textile & General Trading enterprise founded in 1964 by his father, he worked in various capacities in the retail environment until 1986, when he joined Kumba Resources (formerly ISCOR) in the Bushveld region of Thabazimbi. After about 11 years of service in Thabazimbi he moved to Pretoria. At the time of his retirement in 2013, he was part-time involved in Occupational Health & Safety training at a firm in Randburg.

P.J. Stassen and his wife currently live in Centurion, South Africa, and over the years both have also performed as musicians in various congregations of their denomination, for example in cities/towns such as Vanderbijlpark, Bloemfontein, Thabazimbi, Sinoville, Witpoortjie, Klerksdorp, and Centurion. P.J. Stassen enjoys writing in the fields of Biblical Creation Studies, Christian Apologetics (Persuasive Evangelism), and Evangelical Christianity.

SOTERIOLOGY: THE WISDOM OF SALVATION

Essays by PJ Stassen (Publisher) in support of this Story.

BIBLE: *Basic Instructions Before Leaving* EARTH!

EvangelismRSA Image: Creative Commons

The Bible (Christianity). According to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* parts of the *Old Testament* were written as early as the 10th century B.C. with 'final redaction and canonisation' during the 6th and 5th centuries B.C. The *New Testament* was written during the 1st and 2nd centuries A.D. This makes the *Christian Bible* approximately 3000 years *(Old Testament)* to 2000 years *(New Testament)* old.

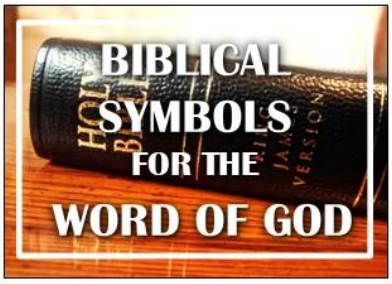
New Testament Attestation. Writes dr. F.F. Bruce, the late Ryland's Professor of *Biblical Criticism & Exegesis* at the *University of Manchester:*

"There is no body of ancient literature in the world which enjoys such a wealth of good textual attestation as the New Testament ... "The evidence for our New Testament writings is ever so much greater than the evidence for many writings of classical writers, the authenticity of which no one dreams of questioning. And if the New Testament were a collection of secular writings, their authenticity would generally be regarded as beyond all doubt." [The John Ankerberg Show].

Comparing Science & Atheism. At first glance it is obvious that scientists (atheists & theists alike) will invariably ascribe 'millions & billions of years' to the *age of the Cosmos* or e.g. the *age of species (biological)* on earth. For instance are the ages of galaxies like *Andromeda* and the *Sombrero* given as *10 billion years* and *10-13 billion years* respectively. Similarly is the oldest (emergence of) life forms on earth given as *4.41 billion yrs.*

The Bitter Irony. So here we have a situation where scientists, i.e. a group who are strict sticklers to the 'scientific method' and 'empiricism', are studying heavenly bodies (astronomy, astrophysics, cosmology etc.) *'billions of years' old* and often *'million & billions' of light-years* away making not only them but also the very *information received at such distances ancient and probably obsolete.*

At the same time palaeontologists & geologists will study and draw conclusions from fossils and rock-formations allegedly *'million of years'* old and expect us to believe everything they say, yet will they still reject the Bible as 'ancient, obsolete & unreliable'!❑



INTRODUCTION. The Bible uses a rich variety of symbols to describe the Word of God. Each symbol reveals a unique aspect of its power, purpose, and effect in the life of believers. Below is a comprehensive (not necessarily exhaustive) list of these symbols, along with scripture references and brief explanations.

Fire & Hammer. *"Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?"* [Jeremiah23:29KJV].

Sword. *"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."* [Hebrews 4:12KJV].

Lamp & Light. *"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."* [Psalm 119:105KJV].

Mirror. *For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightaway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."* [James 1:23–25KJV].

Seed. *"Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God ... that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.* [Luke 8:11, 15bKJV].

Water. *"That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word."* [Ephesians 5:26KJV].
"Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." [John 15:3KJV].

Milk. *"As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby."* [1 Peter 2:2KJV].

Meat. *For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."* [Hebrews 5:12–14KJV].

Bread. *"But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."* [Matthew 4:4KJV].

Honey & Gold. *"More to be desired are they [STATUTES OF THE LORD] than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb."* [Psalm 19:10 KJV].

Rain & Snow. *"For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."* [Isaiah 55:10–11KJV].

Firewood (Fuel). *"Wherefore thus saith the LORD God of hosts, Because ye speak this word, behold, I will make my words in thy mouth fire, and this people wood, and it shall devour them."* [Jeremiah 5:14 KJV].

Anchor. *"Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec."* [Hebrews 6:19-20KJV].

Plumb Line. *Thus he shewed me: and, behold, the Lord stood upon a wall made by a plumbline, with a plumbline in his hand. And the LORD said unto me, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A plumbline. Then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumbline in the midst of my people Israel: I will not again pass by them any more."* [Amos 7:7–8KJV].

Sword of the Spirit. *" And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."* [Ephesians 6:14-17KJV].

Dew. *"My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass."* [Deuteronomy 32:2KJV].

Rod. *"But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked."* [Isaiah 11:4KJV].

Statutes and Commands. *"The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes."* [Psalm 19:8KJV].

Treasure. *"I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil."* [Psalm 119:162KJV].

Fire in the Bones. *"Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay."* [Jeremiah 20:9 KJV].

"Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." [Matthew24:35KJV].

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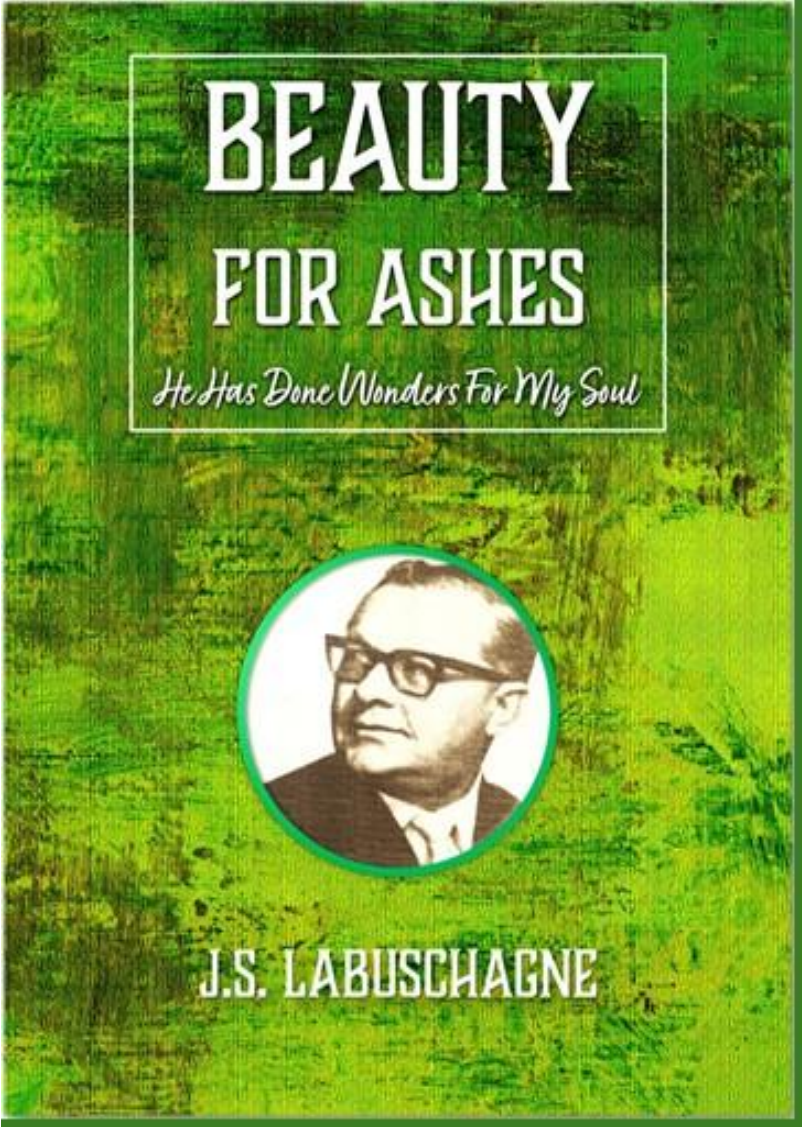

"God will not look you over for medals, degrees or diplomas, but for scars."

Elbert Hubbard
(1856-1915)

Pastor J.S. (Hannes) Labuschagne was born on 29 April 1916 in the district of Bothaville. In 1942 he obtained his BA degree at the University of Stellenbosch. He later served as assistant to Pastor David du Plessis (later known worldwide as "Mr. Pentecost") at the Head Office of the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM), as well as pastor in various AFM congregations. In 1958, with the founding of the Pentecostal Protestant Church (PPC), Pastor Labuschagne became a minister in the PPC, where he served in several offices in the General Executive, including as Federal Chairman of the PPC. He died in the early 1990s in a bus accident on his way back from Namibia to South Africa, at the age of about 77.